

# Mayor Greg Ballard's strategic plan calls for more streetlights, polytechnic school

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Mayor Greg Ballard today unveiled a long-term strategic plan for Indianapolis that builds on a theme he's been hammering home for weeks: make the city a more attractive place for young families and the resulting growth in tax revenue will provide the funding needed to meet the community's aspirations.

The plan encompasses many of the initiatives Ballard has laid out recently to fix local schools, root out crime, spur new development, clean up decaying center-city neighborhoods, attract new jobs and incubate homegrown start-ups.

But it also includes new proposals to install more streetlights and create a school designed to help students transfer from high school to some sort of postsecondary training and on to high-paying jobs.

The [44-page report](#) is called Plan 2020: A Bicentennial Plan for Indianapolis, a nod to the city's 200th birthday in six years. The administration assessed the city's most pressing needs after studying population, income and tax collection trends.

The study returned some sobering conclusions about the city's revenues.

The collection of property taxes — which pay most of the cost for schools, road repairs and other public services — has decreased and remains lower since tax caps were implemented four years ago.

In 2010 the city collected \$268 million. Next year it estimates only \$232 million will be collected in property taxes.

At the same time, another major revenue source, income taxes, has remained static, which reflects a stagnant job market.

In 2010, income tax revenues for the city topped \$249 million but in 2014 it projects collecting only \$243 million.

A big reason for the income tax revenue decline is an exodus from the city of high wage earners.

The number of people earning more than \$150,000 a year has dropped more than 2 percent and the number of people earning between \$100,000 and \$149,000 has declined more than 3 percent. People earning between \$50,000 and \$100,000 has also dropped, while the lowest wage earners, those making less than \$25,000, has increased more than 6 percent.

The city also gets shortchanged because 200,000 people commute to Marion County each day for work but live in the suburbs, where they spend most of the money they earn here.

"If the population of commuters were a city it would be the third largest city in the state," said mayoral spokesman Marc Lotter.

Part of the reason for the migration is because families with school age children, people 35 to 54 years old, are moving to the suburbs to send their children to outlying schools.

Here are some of the report's plans that are new or have previously received little public attention:

- Development of Indianapolis Polytechnic, a school for grades 9 to 14 that would "develop a new generation of skilled employees in high demand areas by seamlessly transitioning students from high school and post-secondary education to high wage, high demand careers."
- Lift Indy's streetlight construction moratorium, in effect since the 1980s. Plans call for determining where additional streetlights are needed to help deter crime and how they can be "sustainably funded."
- Increase the number of cultural and business districts for targeted promotion. A new cultural district around the City Market is expected to be unveiled this spring. Gateway and street improvements will help identify the Lafayette Square area as Indy's "International Marketplace."
- Work with the Indy Chamber and the United Way of Central Indiana to conduct a study on the economic impact of early childhood education in order to make a strong case to the public and policymakers about the enduring value of expanding such offerings. The report says that in other communities such programs have been shown to reduce crime and welfare rolls and increase incomes and educational attainment.

- Construct sidewalks on every thoroughfare to better connect people with key destinations such as schools, work, health care providers and recreational sites. The report says this is an "ongoing and long-term goal, to be assessed and implemented in the next three to six years."

- Create a "self-funded" park strategy. This would be done by increasing the revenue-generating capabilities of parks, with a goal of making 50 percent of all city park operations "self-funded" and freeing up existing park funding for efforts to attract more families to the city.

- Improve the city's regulatory approvals process by creating a business acceleration team to ensure that projects are "moved through administrative processes as quickly and fairly as possible."